NO WORD UNTIL.

A Story of Before and After a Kansas Wedding.

BY OCTAVE THANET.

"Yes, they fit, then and there. That was when he throwed the pistil into the river; but I didn't tell you he throwed Christie after it. He *did;* he was mad clear through! But laws, didn't hurt, he got out again! Seth, he went home and found Hetty and went at her about going to see Christie and meaning to run away with him. She tried to explain and he wouldn't believe her. That did put Hetty awful; she always was feery; and she told him that if he didn't believe her word that she gave him solemn, she never would say another word to him. And she never has!"

In the agitation of her tale, Mrs. Armil mopped her face with both her handkerchiefs. She stretched one arm. "There they live," said she, pointing at the house.

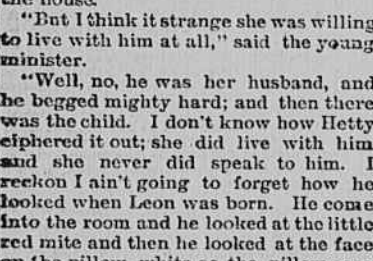
"But I think it strange she was willing to live with him at all," said the young minister.

"Well, no, he was her husband, and he begged mighty hard; and then there was the child. I don't know how Hetty ciphered it out; she did live with him and she never did speak to him. I reckon I ain't going to forget how he looked when Leon was born. He come into the room and he looked at the little red mite and then he looked at the face on the pillow, white as the pillow case was. 'Esther,' he says, 'it will need both of us to bring up our boy; can't you forgive me?' She jest turned her face to the wall. I was sorry for him."

"What did he do?"

"Nothing. Jest drawed his breath and went out of the room. He didn't come back till she got well, but many and many a night I'd look out of the window and see him walking up and down outside, and he was always on hand for errands. Seth is a right kind, nice man."

The minister was thinking what strange similarities there are in dissimilar characters. A story of the same unnatural state of domestic arrangement in New England flitted through her mind. The woman had died unbendingly, with her last motion rejecting her husband's prayer; but she was a religious fanatic. Would Mrs. Rogers carry her sense of injury or her sense



HE THROWED CHRISTIE AFTER IT.

of duty to her word so far as poor Aunt Maria Edgerby? she thought, and what a life those two must have lived in this weird silence!

"You have not told me the rest," she said. "How did they come to this place?"

"Well," said Mrs. Armil, "I was settled here and Seth had a little money left him, and he liked here, and so they come, and Seth has been a-working and a-toiling ever sence to git his farm clear. Well, he has paid off all into twenty-five hundred. He got a mighty nice farm, and Hetty does look after things close. Now, look at their cows—not nigh so ga'nted as most. Hetty didn't let them into the cornfields after crops was laid by—no, ma'am; she cut down everything and saved the fodder. They'll do all right if they kin git the mortgage man to wait, and I got hopes he will, fer he waited for Emil. Emil sent him all the money he could raise, but you see the banks are as bad off as the rest of us now. The man wrote a real nice letter to Emil and renewed it for three years. I feel thankful enough, folks are so poor now. The Gannetts, they was sold out last Thursday, and it was dreadful—eight little children, and nobody willing to pay anything for the cows, they was so run down. And they've set off in their wagon for Indian territory. I know as well as I want to that the second boy won't live to git there, he's so puny. Poor little trick! He was saying to his mother: 'Oh, maw, will we have apple sass and fresh meat to eat in the nation?' Hetty, she jest fetched over a bag of dried apples and I gave 'em some sugar and a loaf of light bread to carry. 'It may be our turn next,' said Seth, and he gave the little boy fifty cents. It would jest break his heart to lose this place, but I am hoping Mr. Raimund—"

"What is his name? Raimund, of my town?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"He is not a hard man."

"Well, so I say; and it's hard for them that has money owing as well as them that owes. Well, 'twill be all the same a hundred years from now, but it's hard pickings in the meanwhile. Here we are!"

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Rogers opened the door, a tall man who stooped a little. He wore the black broadcloth of a rural politician, but it was scrupulously well brushed. His face was rather long, looking longer for a gray chin beard, and a bald forehead. His hair like his beard was gray and beautifully soft. It curled [illegible] his face. His blue eyes were mild; indeed the whole expression of his face was that of melancholy patience.

[illegible] along he dragged his [illegible] jump to his gate—more than awkwardness. He [illegible] Armil warmly, and [illegible]y that was not so much [illegible]ined, to Miss Brainerd.

"This is my wife, Miss Brainerd," he said, in the same tone that any husband might have used.

The minister, in her one year of office, had seen some strange sides of domestic life; but this drama had new

MR. ROGERS OPENED THE DOOR.

features; she felt a little thrill along her nerves as she glanced at the woman who had not spoken to her own husband for ten years. This woman did not look capable of such weird obstinacy; she was pretty, as Mrs. Armil had said, but with a more delicate and refined beauty than the minister had expected. "She looks—whom does she look like?" thought the minister; "I declare it is Mona Lisa. She has just that mysterious smile."

Perhaps a photograph of Mona Lisa hanging side by side on the wall with the Archangel Michael suggested the comparison. She wondered if it was Mrs. Rogers' taste that had selected them, or the quiet paper on the walls, the little dash of color in a crimson drapery for the ugly mantle behind the stove, the pretty wicker chair in the corner, the plants in the window. A small library, she was sure, belonged to the husband. "No," she remembered, "Mrs. Armil said that she furnished the room to suit *him*."

And after a glance at the wife's toilet, a brown alpaca gown made up with profuse draperies and trimmings of red velvet, she gave Mr. Rogers credit for any evidence of taste.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Armil, who wished to do honor to her guest, had introduced her like the columns of a country paper as "Rev. Brainerd."

She now set the conversational ball in motion with: "Rev. Brainerd's been interested in the destitution round here."

"Yes, it's bad," said Rogers, crossing his legs and nervously twisting his fingers, "it's bad, but we could get along if we could get more time on our mortgage."

"Are the farms about here mortgaged?"

"Yes, ma'am. You may say all about here are. Pearl," addressing Mrs. Armil, "have you heard?"

Mrs. Armil told more in detail the story that she had told Miss Brainerd. The interest in the man's eyes was plain, and though veiled the same interest was in the woman's.

"Ain't you had a letter from him yet?" said Mrs. Armil, with the sympathy of safe people for others' troubles.

"No," answered Mrs. Rogers, "not yet; but we sent Leon to the town to see if we had a letter."

Then the talk drifted into generalities interrupted by the sound of hoofs. "It's Leon," exclaimed Rogers. He went hastily to the door.

The child of this strange couple came in. He looked like his mother and his father, delicate like the one, dark-haired and smiling like the other. His eyes turned from the man to the woman in a cordial glance that embraced them both.

"Yes, I got the letter," he said. Then, for the first time perceiving the guest, he made his awkward schoolboy bow to the lady and submitted to be kissed by Mrs. Armil.

"We have a mortgage on hand, too, you see," said Rogers; "will you ladies excuse me?" Here he tore open the letter with fingers plainly a tremble. There was no attempt at disguise; every woman in the room stared at him. For him, his jaw fell; he grew paler, until his skin took the tint of gray ashes. His first action was to hand Leon the sheet with its type-written copy and engraved heading.

"Give it to your mother," he said, huskily.

Leon's eyes shone as he obeyed; he was a child and hopeful. Mrs. Rogers read the letter; she may have had more self-control than he, for there was no change, only a rigid settling of the muscles. "She is thinking that she told him so," reflected the minister.

"Ma," Leon's voice broke the silence, "won't you tell me?"

"There ain't no reason why they shouldn't all hear it," said the man. "He says that he was expecting to extend, knowing we'd had hard times, but he read my name in the list of representatives that voted for the stay law. He doesn't consider his property safe in a state where they pass such laws, or with a man that will vote for them." He swallowed something in his throat. "I guess," he went on, "there's lots of fellows feel like he does, and lots of poor farmers will have to give up for the same reason. If it was only me, it wouldn't be so bad; but—" for the first time he looked at his wife. She returned his look, a dull red creeping into her cheek; nor did she take her eyes off his face while he remained in the room—"it isn't only me. If we have made a mistake we have ruined all the others along with us."

"That's jest so," said Mrs. Armil, heartily. Rogers smiled a little bitterly. What a tragedy the man's life had been, Miss Brainerd thought. What a loneliness! He had in him, she decided in a flush of sympathy, rarer and finer qualities of nature, of affection and aspiration, than his unforgiving wife could ever comprehend.

"I seem to have missed it all 'round," he went on. "I did try, Hetty, and if I had got the farm cleared off I meant to have asked you if—if—things couldn't be different; there was a school we wanted to send Leon—" he did not know how to finish the sentence, apparently; but the mute entreaty of the look turned on his wife's unmoved face awakened Miss Brainerd's indignant pity. "Well," he said, quietly, "there is always the prairie schooner for me to take to; for I don't think I was cut out to make laws. I can't harm anybody but myself on the prairie; and Pearl will see you and Leon have a place to stay. Now, I guess if you ladies will excuse me, I'll go put up the horse. I'll be right back."

As he stood in the doorway, his eyes turned back to Leon. "Shall I come too, pa?" said the child. Miss Brainerd, at least, noticed a fine quiver pass over the man's face before he answered: "No, I shall come back soon. You stay with your mother."

Still, she was looking at him. He walked out alone. Then she rose, her lips set firmly. "Will you excuse me,

"WILL YOU EXCUSE ME, TOO?"

too," she said; "I want to speak to my husband."

"Oh Lord!" gasped Mrs. Armil. But Miss Brainerd had her word ready: "Tell him please that I know Mr. Raimund, well; he is in my congregation; and I will engage that he shan't foreclose the mortgage."

"Well, Lord be praised! You're doing right, Hetty," called Mrs. Armil at the empty door, as soon as astonishment released her tongue; "better late than never. But to think of her giving in now when hes' lost all his property, and him the helplessest man alive!"

"I think that was why," laughed Miss Brainerd; "such slight things are women."

[THE END.]

EXPERIMENTING WITH COLD.

The Interesting Observations of a Berlin Professor.

The laboratory of Prof. Pictet, at Berlin, is designed for the investigation of the effects of cold. The refrigerating machinery, driven by several powerful engines, keeps the objects under observation at any temperature between 20 degrees and 200 degrees below zero Cent. as long as may be required. The cooling is effected by the evaporation of liquids, and is divided into three stages, each with its special apparatus. For the first stage is used the mixture of sulphurous and carbonic acids known as "Pictet's fluid," which is condensed at a pressure of about two atmospheres in a spiral tube cooled by water. Laughing gas (oxide of nitrogen) is the liquid chosen for the second stage. It is condensed at a pressure of ten or twelve atmospheres in a tube kept at about 80 degrees below zero by the action of the first circuit. For the third stage atmospheric air is employed, and passes into the liquid state at a pressure of seventy-five atmospheres when the temperature is kept at 135 degrees below zero by the other circuits. The evaporation of the liquefied air gives a cold of about 200 degrees below zero. Absolute zero is placed at 273 degrees below zero Cent., but Prof. Pictet regards 255 degrees below zero as about the lowest attainable artificial temperature. One of the effects of great cold has been the showing of quicksilver in beautiful, fern-like crystals. Glycerine also has been crystallized; and cognac has been given by freezing the peculiar mellowness commonly attained only by long keeping. The most important result thus far, however, has been the purification of chloroform, the crystals which form in the commercial chloroform at about 68 degrees below zero being almost absolutely pure.

ABOUT BABY TENDERS.

Queer Frames in Which Little French Children Are Tucked Away.

In parts of France where the mothers must go in the fields to work as the fathers do, they make wooden frames to put the babies in while they are

ROUND AND ROUND.

away. In warm, pleasant weather the great back-post is set firmly in the ground, and when the wooden circle is unclasped and the baby is put in, she can trot around in a little ring on the grass and play. Some of these baby-tenders are more comfortable; a soft wide cloth band holds the baby up on her feet, and she can step about or she

CANNOT FALL. FOR RESTLESS BABIES.

can stand still and rest, and look at the birds and butterflies. You can see in the picture another kind of baby-tender, and how a restless little boy may be kept out of mischief when he is left alone. These baby-tenders keep the babies safe, but how glad they must be to cuddle in their mothers' laps at night!—Babyland.

Wise Beyond Her Years.

Flossie is six years old. "Mamma," she asked one day, "if I get married will I have to have a husband like pa?"

"Yes," replied the mother, with an amused smile.

"And if I don't get married will I have to be an old maid like Aunt Jane?"

"Yes."

"Mamma"—after a pause—"it's a tough world for us women, ain't it?"—Demorest's Monthly.

An Inducement.

Ruralistic Customer—How does it look on me?

Dealer (in hollow whisper)—Mein frent, haf you an enemy?

Ruralistic Customer (amused)—You bet I have, that Si Perkins—

Dealer (in still more hollow whisper)—You schoost puy dot clodings, unt vear it so your enemy vill see it, unt he vos of envy die right off.—Life.

A GREAT many men are saved from being villains by not having skill and daring in proportion to their inclinations.—Indianapolis News.